



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

THE EVOLUTION OF DISCOVERY.

WHILE sitting in Mr. Edison's library a few days ago I chanced to turn over one of his many scrap-books. Among the extracts from newspapers was an editorial, published some years ago in a journal devoted to the interests of the gas manufacturers, in which the editor informed the world that Mr. Edison had totally failed in his efforts to invent an electric lamp, and that his idea of incandescent electric lighting was a dream never to be realized. Mr. Edison's quiet humor in preserving the editorial is characteristic.

A few years ago some enthusiastic inventor said he had found a mine of wealth in every clay bank. Why not? Did not the school books tell us clay contained alumina in abundance? This hopeful person had dug it out and we were to see great things, bridges of cobweb section, steel-like strength and silvery beauty; iron was to be such a very base metal nobody would think of using it. We had the metal, but it cost two hundred dollars a pound. This enterprising person had made it cheap. The fairy-like "aluminium age" did not appear, and yet it is a curious fact that to-day the metal is practically cheap and is in daily use to make certain valuable alloys.

We have read that if 2.75 per cent. of manganese is added to steel that an utterly useless compound is produced. An alloy of only 4.9 per cent. is so brittle that it can be broken up with a hammer like so much glass. Now comes the announcement that, if the percentage of manganese is greatly increased, we have a series of new and very valuable alloys of remarkable qualities.

These things are confusing. Who are we to believe? If men of learning are so easily upset by little facts like the electric light, what are plain folks to think? Shall we cheerfully believe everything, or abide in the good old mediæval frame of mind that believes nothing at all?

As far as nature is concerned, we are bounded by the limitations of our senses. Light, heat, and sound we understand as well as we can understand them in the present condition of our senses. Electricity and magnetism have been quite as well apprehended, and the great advance in these fields is not so much the discovery of new laws as the utilization in new ways of old facts. In chemistry there has been discovery and invention and it is in chemical research we have had our greatest surprises and may look for the most hopeful future.

Invention and improvement there will be, and yet it may be questioned if the greatest progress in both invention and discovery may not eventually spring from improvements in our senses. It is fair to suppose our senses are improving, and that the time will come when we shall apprehend things to which we are now

blind, deaf, and insensible. We only know what our senses tell us. What if we may some day see, hear, and feel far better than now? We cannot see the invisible ends of the spectrum. What might we learn if we could? We cannot hear below the sixteen-foot tone or above the treble of an insect. What might we not hear if we could hear more? May it not be from the improvement of our senses that the great discoveries and inventions of the far future are yet to come?

We are, therefore, safe in believing all things are possible, because there is no apparent limit to the evolution of our physical being. Meanwhile, we may accept new things in a spirit of expectant attention, ready to believe, glad to be convinced when any fact in nature is made useful, and yet hesitating to accept claims of new discoveries made by men whose senses are no better than our own. A thousand horse-power in a tea-cup is senseless, because beyond sense. Speech by wire is sensible, because within the range of sensation.

CHARLES BARNARD.

II.

DO WE WANT DIALECTS?

A CERTAIN English critic once remarked that this country was not *interesting*, implying by his speech a contrast with Great Britain and her castles, ruins, peasantry and dialects. He was in some ways an able man, so that we were willing to smile at his insular narrowness and listen for the grain of gold that might be found in his utterances; but we saw at once that when he spoke of dialects, he referred to the monotonous similarity of our speech, North, South, East and West.

However much alike the citizens of the several States may speak (and their similarity of speech is an evidence of education and a matter of pride to all good Americans), we have no lack of dialects in our literature. The Tennessee and Kentucky mountaineers have proved prolific of bad spelling and dialectic eccentricities in more than one novel, while the patois of the creoles and the dialect of the negroes have irritated thousands of readers and hundreds of type-setters. In literature, at least, we have a multitude of dialects.

Do we want dialects in this country? No! Emphatically no! A dialect is a sign of ignorance, an unailing evidence of the lack of education. We want none of it. We want the negro to speak as the Yankee, and the Yankee as the Westerner, and the Creole of New Orleans as the College Professor at Princeton.

There are some persons (it is hardly necessary to say they are the possessors of settled incomes) who find poverty picturesque and interesting, who find in a tumble-down house with battered sides and leaky roof an "interesting object" in the landscape. So also there are others who find a toi-burdened, unlettered peasantry an "interesting" part of the social life of a nation. But here, in these United States, are we not ready to sacrifice the picturesqueness of ignorance and poverty for the substantial if not "interesting" benefit of universal education and a common tongue? That so many volumes come from the press, decked out in the cheap finery of a gew-gaw dialect is much to be regretted. Ignorance should no more be idealized by the novelist than sin—the twin-sister of ignorance. Those who speak dialects should be held up by the teacher as objects of pity, not idealized into heroic proportions because of their dialectic failing. Every novel that appears in dialect debases literature as much as if it were written in the dialect of the gutter, or the vile speech of the slums. Pure speech is indicative of pure thought; and proper speech, of a well trained mind. We have great need, in America, at least, of pure thoughts and well-trained minds, and we have no use whatsoever for dialects, nor the ignorance of which a dialect is the offspring.

NORTON V. JOHNSON.